

MINUTES
Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
June 23, 2016

Members present: Fred Mills, Chair, Bill Wilson, Michael Lombardo, and Peter Britton.

Town Officials and staff present: Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections, Mary Beth Lawton, Director, Council on Aging, Don Preston, Habitat for Humanity, Dorr Fox, Community Projects Coordinator and members of the community.

Fred Mills called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

MINUTES

Peter Britten moved to approve the minutes of the April 20, 2016 meeting and the May 23, 2016 meeting. Michael Lombardo seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

UPDATE ON HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PROJECT AT 270 ASBURY STREET,
HAMILTON, MA

Dorr Fox explained that the project has received Zoning Board of Appeals approval and the appeal period will expire on July 6, 2016. If no appeals are filed, Habitat for Humanity will submit a request for funds on July 6th and the Town will issue a check on July 8th. Habitat for Humanity expects to close on the property on July 11th or 12th. Mr. Lombardo stated that he would like documentation that the funds have been transferred, the site will be used for affordable housing, and no appeals have been filed. Mr. Mills stated that the grant agreement and the 6D form required at the closing will ensure this.

Russ Tanzer requested that the Trust discuss the grant agreement. The Trust commenced with a discussion on local preference. Jack Lawrence inquired about the funds that the Town has put into the project in relation to the total cost of the project. Mr. Mills stated the Town is granting \$250,000. Don Preston stated that the total project cost is \$575,000. Considering this Town investment, Rosemary Kennedy advocated for local preference of both units. Mr. Preston stated that the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) allows for a maximum of 70% local preference. Patrick Reffett explained that the additional units will not be added to Town's inventory of affordable units that count toward the state mandated 10% if there is an increase in local preference beyond 70%. Kate Walker stated she thought that if the project has rental units, all of the

units count toward the 10%. Mr. Mills explained that the project is not a rental project.

Mr. Lawrence inquired whether the units will have mortgages. Mr. Preston stated they will. Mr. Mills explained how the local preference process works. He explained that people who work or live in town will get extra “chips” in the lottery, which increases their chance to “win” the lottery. Ms. Kennedy stated that this is not how she understood the process from talking with DHCD. Mr. Mills stated that they will have to agree to disagree.

Bill Wilson inquired whether the amount of money that the Town grants to the project influences the percentage of local preference. Mr. Britton inquired whether DHCD has an official definition of what is considered “local”. Mr. Lombardo stated that the rules are different between rental and ownership projects and that it is a point that needs to be clarified. Mary Beth Lawton inquired whether there is a process to ensure that the owners will occupy the premises and not rent their unit out. Mr. Preston stated that there is a condominium association, of which Habitat for Humanity is a third member. Rentals will not be allowed.

Mr. Britton moved to approve the written draft as the agreement between the Affordable Housing Trust and Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Britton inquired how long the process took to obtain all the approvals and the Town grant. Mr. Preston stated that it took six months. It took longer because they went through the comprehensive permit process and because of DHCD requirements. Mr. Lombardo inquired whether people can contact him to volunteer on the project. Mr. Preston stated that they could.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION ON ALL BOARDS MEETING/ NEXT STEPS FOR HAHT

Ms. Lawton stated that she believes that it would have been good for each board to have a round table at the meeting to discuss the project. It would have been good to have each board give input into the discussion. She mentioned that the Council on Aging met before the meeting to develop questions. Mr. Wilson stated that he would have liked to have had round table discussions, including a discussion on next steps. Ms. Lawton stated that the Council on Aging has created a housing survey. They are pleased that the topic of affordable housing is being discussed.

Mr. Tanzer stated that he thought the meeting could have been better. He suggested that there could be an additional meeting. Mr. Wilson stated that they could solicit questions from boards before the meeting. Mr. Lawton concurred. She also stated that there is a need for senior housing. Mr. Lombardo noted that Harborlight is focusing on family housing, when perhaps there is more of a need for more senior housing.

Mr. Mills noted that DHCD does not prefer to have local preference for projects. However, they accept it. Ms. Lawton stated that Hamilton residents do not want

their community to change. She suggested that the Town can create affordable units in existing large homes. A large house can be divided up into several existing units. The building's residents can create an association to run the units. Mr. Mills stated that there may be a zoning issue. However, he mentioned that there is pending legislation which would allow for communities to create affordable units within their existing housing stock. However, in the meantime, Hamilton can consider changing the zoning.

Ms. Lawton stated that the Affordable Housing Trust should look into how other towns have created affordable housing. Ms. Kennedy stated that she hopes that Hamilton does not get stuck in thinking that all affordable housing should be for low income residents. She believes that affordable housing should be built for moderate income households that make 80% of the Town's median income. Susan Lawrence stated that each phase of the Longmeadow project would have nine units for very low income residents. Mr. Mills noted that the Longmeadow project has been an important learning process on Chapter 40B MGL as well as affordable housing in general.

ALTERNATIVE SITES

Mr. Wilson stated that Andrew DeFranza has discussed changing the Longmeadow project. He believes that the Town needs to look into alternative sites, especially town-owned land. Mr. Britton noted that the Affordable Housing Trust endorsed a 24 unit project at the Longmeadow site. The project has now turned into a much larger project. Ms. Lawton inquired whether the Willow Street site owned by the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) could be used for affordable housing. Mr. Fox explained that the HDC is proposing a mixed use development on the site that would consist of 5,000 square feet of commercial space and twenty residential units in a three story building. Some of the residential units would be affordable. Ms. Lawton stated that unless there is an elevator, the housing would not be suitable for seniors. She suggested that the HDC partner with the Housing Authority to create a project on the site. Ms. Kennedy stated that she does not believe the HDC site is suitable for a project with three floors containing 5,000 square feet of commercial space and twenty units.

Mr. Mills discussed the concept of looking at Town-owned sites for affordable housing. Mr. Lombardo stated that most lots are small unbuildable lots. He stated that several lots have been identified. Mr. Wilson inquired whether these lots could be sold to generate funds for affordable housing. Mr. Lombardo stated that they could either dispose of the lots through an RFP or an auction. The Town has been told that an auction is not a good option. Mr. Britton stated that most of the parcels are odd pieces with problems that could not be used for housing. Ms. Lawton inquired whether Rachel Maketon had already looked into this topic. Mr. Lombardo stated that no-one had considered whether the sites could be developed through Chapter 40B MGL. He stated that he had a file on the properties and many are paper roads. He stated that there is a parcel on Lake Drive that is large enough. However,

it could be used for other purposes, such as recreation. Mr. Mills noted that Habitat for Humanity may be interested in smaller parcels.

Ms. Lawton inquired whether the Town has had any discussions with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to develop land for affordable housing. Mr. Lombardo stated that affordable housing is not part of the school's mission and there would be problems with neighbors. Mr. Mills stated that in the past they have not wanted to affirmatively market their housing units. Ms. Lawton inquired about their existing empty units. Mr. Mills stated that they are not affirmatively marketed nor deed restricted.

Mr. Britton discussed declining school enrollment. He suggested that schools have adjoining land that could be used for affordable housing. Ms. Lawton stated that land adjacent to Winthrop School or the former garden center could be used for affordable housing. Mr. Lawrence stated that since the Longmeadow site is flawed, town owned land and other parcels should be looked at for use as affordable housing. Mr. Lombardo stated that the Town does not have the staff to manage the projects. Mr. Wilson suggested hiring a consultant.

Mr. Mills stated that he does not like the term "forced down our throats". He stated that the state is not forcing affordable housing down the town's throat. He noted that the statute (40-B) has been in existence for fifty years and the Town has not created the required affordable housing during that time. Mr. Wilson stated that it is not the state that is the concern, but the private developer that will take advantage of the statute. He believes that the Town needs to be proactive and create the housing so that there is local control.

Ms. Lawton stated that the Town needs a consultant to determine the affordable housing needs and develop a plan. Mr. Mills stated that the Town needs a consultant to negotiate an actual project. Ms. Kennedy stated that the Town needs a subcommittee to locate sites. She stated that these sites could be small scattered parcels around the Town. She believes that the affordable units should be sold to households that earn eighty percent of the Town's median income. Mr. Wilson stated that the community has woken up on the topic and it is time to create a list of properties that could be potentially used for affordable housing. Mr. Britton stated that there is a need for a consultant to get the Town from point A to point B. Mr. Lombardo stated that the Town can start with existing staff looking at Town owned property. The Town can also explore the topic with Town legal counsel. Ms. Lawton stated that the Town needs to look at how other towns are creating affordable housing and getting to the required 10%.

PENDING LEGISLATION CONCERNING NOTIFICATION OF AVAILABLE BANK HELD PROPERTY

Mr. Mills stated that there is pending legislation that will be filed in the fall where lender controlled foreclosed properties would be required to be offered to the Town first for the purpose of creating affordable housing. Mr. Lawrence inquired whether

there is a database for these properties and whether they could be matched up with Town owned properties. Mr. Mills stated that there is not a list.

REVIEW OF FUNDS AND EXPENDITURES

Mr. Mills stated that the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust has just under \$240,000. These funds could be used for clerical staff or a consultant. Ms. Lawton stated that the money could be used for grants. Mr. Mills stated that the Town could offer money for deed restrictions to people to maintain their properties. However, when they talked to people previously, they did not want to do this. Mr. Wilson questioned why anyone would want to do this. Ms. Lawton stated that the Trust should still look into the program. Mr. Lombardo stated that this topic could be placed on an upcoming agenda.

The members of the Trust discussed the agenda for the next meeting. They decided that the next meeting will take place on Thursday, July 21st. Mr. Mills stated that he is leaving the Affordable Housing Trust and that this was his last meeting. He stated that there is a need for affordable housing in Hamilton and advocated for its creation. Mr. Lombardo moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm. Mr. Britton seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.